



James "Jim" Bowie

**This is a biographical work
based on historical documents
but which may also include legends
with edits, notes and additional images**

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PREFACE:

James "Jim" Bowie is a legendary hero in the history of early Texas, mainly due to his use of the "Bowie Knife" and his defence at the Alamo and subsequent death there. However, he is also a controversial figure, being an owner of slaves and an active businessman in the buying and selling of slaves in Louisiana and Texas. A convert to the Catholic faith and renouncing of American citizenship to become a citizen of Mexico was necessary to wed a wealthy senorita and obtain Mexican land grants. Jim Bowie was a plantation owner, pioneer, politician and warrior. To write about his exploits and identify the how and why, I found it necessary to research his timeline in chronological order, from his birth to his death, so that readers will be entertained as well as educated by "Jim Bowie - Life Legacy Legend".

TIMELINE

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Reason (Rezin) Bowie Sr. Born

Reason (Rezin) Bowie Sr. was born between 1756 and 1762, in Orange County, South Carolina. He had a twin brother named James. In the Revolutionary War Rezin enlisted in 1779 in Col. Francis "Swamp Fox" Marion's 5th Regiment in South Carolina. A British officer nearly severed his hand with a sabre thrust. He ended up in a hospital, and in 1782, lost his heart to the young woman who had nursed him back to health. Her name was Elvira Catesby Jones (1766-1837), a daughter of John Jones, a Welsh immigrant. Rezin and Elvira were married in Burke County in 1782. Five of their children were born there.

About the year 1787 (1791?), they moved from Georgia to Elliot Springs in the state of Tennessee, where they remained for six or seven years. Their four youngest children were born there. In Sumner County, Tennessee, Reason (Rezin) Bowie Sr. most likely was given a grant of 400 acres of land in recognition of his military service.

According to court records in Logan County, Kentucky, Deed book dated 5 July 1794, Jim's father had moved from Tennessee to Kentucky. There the family farmed, operated a gristmill with the help of eight slaves, and likely distilled bourbon whisky. The Logan County property was sold in 1800. After a short stay in Livingston County, Kentucky, the family moved to the Spanish-held District of New Madrid, now in Missouri. Later, they sold the Missouri property and established themselves in the future Catahoula Parish, Louisiana.

Rezin Bowie is considered to be the founder of the Louisiana branch of the family. Taken from "The Autobiography of John Jones Bowie"
"...and he came and settled on the Bushley Bayou, in what was then the district of Rapides, Louisiana, and under Spanish rule. Here he remained till 1809, when he again, and for the last time, took up the line of march, and finally settled in the district of Opelousas, where he remained until he died, in 1819, in the fall of the year".



James “Jim” Bowie Born

James “Jim” Bowie was born on April 10, 1796 near Terrapin Creek, now Spring Creek, where it crosses Bowie's Mill Road, now Turner-town Road, nine miles northwest of Franklin, Logan County, now Simpson County, Kentucky. He was the ninth of ten children born to Reason (or Rezin) and Elvira “Elve” Ap-Catesby Jones. After a move to Spanish-held New Madrid in Missouri, the family crossed the Mississippi to Catahoula Parish in southeastern Louisiana. The elder Bowie had obtained a Spanish grant of eight hundred arpents along Bushley Bayou in Catahoula Parish, about thirty miles west of Natchez, Mississippi.

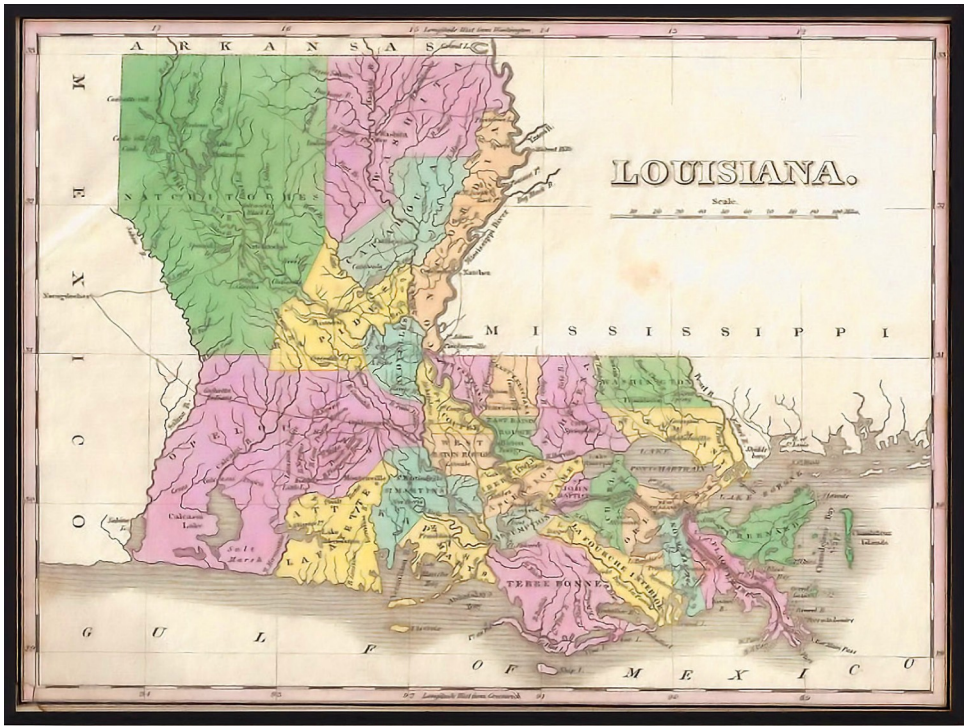
(Note) One *arpent* is an old French unit of land area equivalent to 3,420 square meters (about 1 acre), the standard measure of land in those areas settled during the French regime.

According to Rezin Bowie Sr's brother John, he fled "*the refinements of civilization*" and "*retired to wilder regions, where he could enjoy those sports and stirring adventures peculiar to a frontier life.*"

On May 2, 1801, at Rapides, Louisiana, Reason Bowie Sr and his brothers David, Rhesa, and John swore allegiance to the Spanish government. In October the families settled on farms in what is now Catahoula Parish.

The Catahoula region was wild country, and the Bowie boys, especially Rezin and Jim, gloried in the life. They acquired the survival skills of an Indian and developed expertise in use of weapons. The Bowies lived on Bushley Creek where Reason Sr's twin brother Rhesa and brother David developed land grants nearby.

The Bowies' first economic endeavor was a whiskey still that garnered needed cash and trade until it was abandoned in favor of cotton cultivation. Reason Bowie Sr had some twenty slaves, more than any other man in the Catahoula area.



In Catahoula the elder Reason's sons, James Bowie, John Jones Bowie, Stephen Bowie, and Rezin Pleasant Bowie Jr, grew to manhood. The family took an active part in community affairs and, as stated, the elder Bowie reportedly became the largest slave owner in his locale, with twenty slaves.

About 1809 the Bowie clan moved to the Atakapa country in southeastern Louisiana. Once there, Reason purchased 640 acres on the Vermilion River near the mouth of Little Bayou, where he grew cotton and sugarcane, raised livestock, and bought and sold slaves. He then developed a plantation near Little Bayou, where he grew cotton and sugarcane, raised livestock, and bought and sold slaves. Reason Bowie Sr died there around 1821. In his teens James Bowie worked in Avoyelles and Rapides parishes, where he floated lumber to market. He invested in property on the Bayou Boeuf and traded in 1817–18 at what in the future would become Bennett's Store, south of Cheneyville. He was fond of hunting and fishing, and family tradition says that he caught and rode wild horses, rode alligators and trapped bears.

When grown, Bowie was described by his brother John as "a stout, rather raw-boned man, of six feet height, weighed 180 pounds." He had light-colored hair, keen grey eyes "rather deep set in his head," a fair complexion, and high cheek-bones. Bowie had an "open, frank disposition," but when aroused by an insult, his anger was terrible.

During the War of 1812, James and Rezin joined the Second Division, Consolidated, a unit that contained the Seventeenth through Nineteenth regiments, drawn from Avoyelles, Rapides, Natchitoches, Catahoula, and Ouachita parishes. In January 1815, according to family records, the brothers were on their way to join Andrew Jackson's forces at New Orleans when the war ended. So, they saw no military action in the War Of 1812.

*From NPS.gov - CHALTroopRoster. 17th, 18th & 19th REGIMENTS CONSOLIDATED (Avoyelles, Rapides, Natchitoches; Cataboula, Ouachits,'181L-181S) Bountea, Ksidro, Bourdelon, **Bowie, James**, Bowles, Robert, **Bowie J, Reason**, Boyar, Juan, Boyea, Joseph*

(Note) Bennett's Store - The commercial significance of the Bennett place lies in the fact that it was part of the important Bayou Boeuf navigation trade with New Orleans. The owner, Ezra Bennett, acted as local agent for New Orleans cotton factors, making the store an important commercial focal point for local planters. The rich land of the area had been settled comparatively recently and Bayou Boeuf (Beef) provided access to the outside world for the planter's produce. The first store at Eldred's Bend had been built by Joseph B. Robert.





Slave Trade With Jean Lafitte

Jim Bowie and his brother Rezin Jr. engaged with Jean Lafitte in buying and selling slaves from 1817 til 1821. A partial history of Jean Lafitte's activity in Louisiana and Galveston sets the scene. Jean Lafitte (c.1780 – c.1823) was a French pirate and privateer who operated in the Gulf of Mexico in the early 19th century. He and his older brother Pierre spelled their last name Laffite, but English language documents of the time used "Lafitte". This has become the common spelling in the United States, including places named after him.

Lafitte is believed to have been born either in Basque-France or the French colony of Saint-Domingue. By 1805, he was operating a warehouse in New Orleans to help distribute the goods smuggled by his brother Pierre Lafitte. The United States government passed the Embargo Act of 1807, so the Lafittes moved their operations to an island in Barataria Bay, Louisiana. By 1810, their new port had become very successful; the Lafittes had a profitable smuggling operation and also started to engage in piracy.

Despite Lafitte warning the other Baratarians of a possible military attack on their base of operations, a United States naval force successfully invaded in September 1814 and captured most of his fleet. Later, in return for a legal pardon, Lafitte and his fleet helped General Andrew Jackson defend New Orleans during the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812, as British forces sought access to the Mississippi River. After securing victory, Jackson paid tribute to the Lafitte brothers' efforts, as well as those of their fellow privateers, in despatches.

Lafitte's native language was clearly French, though the specific dialect is a matter of some debate. He was evidently able to speak English reasonably well and most likely had a working knowledge of Spanish. He was educated with his brother at a military academy on Saint Kitts in the Caribbean. No samples of his writing survive, except his signature; his surviving letters were always written by a secretary. His reading and writing abilities, therefore, remain unclear. During his life he acted as a soldier, sailor, diplomat, merchant, and much more demonstrating natural gifts for leadership.

The United States made the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. In January 1808, the government began to enforce the Embargo Act of 1807, which barred American ships from docking at any foreign port and imposed an embargo on goods imported into the US. This was problematic for New Orleans merchants, who had relied heavily on trade with Caribbean colonies of other nations. The Lafitte brothers began to look for another port from which they could smuggle goods to local merchants.

They established themselves on the small and sparsely populated island of Barataria, in Barataria Bay. The bay was located beyond a narrow passage between the barrier islands of Grand Terre and Grande Isle. Barataria was far from the U.S. naval base, and ships could easily smuggle in goods without being noticed by customs officials. Workers would reload goods into smaller batches onto pirogues or barges for transport through the bayous to New Orleans.



Based in New Orleans, Pierre Lafitte served as a silent partner, looking after their interests in the city. Jean Lafitte spent the majority of his time in Barataria managing the daily hands-on business of outfitting privateers and arranging the smuggling of stolen goods. By 1810, the island had become a booming port. Seamen flocked to the island, working on the docks or at the warehouses until they were chosen as crew for one of the privateers.

Dissatisfied with their role as brokers, in October 1812 the Lafitte brothers purchased a schooner and hired a Captain Trey Cook to sail it. As the schooner did not have an official commission from a national government, its captain was considered a pirate operating illegally. In January 1813 they took



their first prize, a Spanish hermaphrodite brig loaded with 77 slaves. Sale of the slaves and additional cargo generated \$18,000 in profits and the brothers adapted the captured ship for use in piracy, naming it Dorada. Within weeks, Dorada captured a schooner loaded with over \$9,000 in goods. The captured schooner was not considered useful for piracy so, after unloading its cargo, the Lafittes returned the ship to its former captain and crew. The Lafittes gained a reputation for treating captive crew members well, and often returned captured ships to their original crew.

The brothers soon acquired a third ship, La Diligente. They outfitted it with 12 fourteen-pounder cannons. Dorada captured a fourth ship, a schooner they renamed Petit Milan. The brothers stripped down their original ship and used its guns to outfit the new one. They sailed three ships, which Davis described as likely "one of the largest privately owned corsair fleets operating on the coast, and the most versatile." For several months, the Lafittes would send the ships directly to New Orleans with a legal cargo and would take on outgoing provisions in the city.

The crew would create a manifest that listed not the provisions that had been purchased, but smuggled items stored at Barataria. Uninterested in exports from New Orleans, customs agents rarely checked the accuracy of the manifests. The ship would sail to the mouth of Bayou Lafourche, load the contraband goods, and sail "legally" back to New Orleans, with goods listed on a certified manifest. After efforts to expel him from Louisiana, Jean Lafitte moved his operations to Galveston.

(Note) Taken from *"Lafitte, the Louisiana Pirate and Patriot."* *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 2.4 (1919) *"Corsair of the Gulf"* A Paper by Hon. Gaspar Cusachs, President of the Louisiana Historical Society and Read by him before the Society December 20, 1919.

"As early as 1812, he built a small village upon the site of the present city of Galveston, his own house being two stories and well furnished. All others were one story, and of a plainer construction. They procured their building materials from New Orleans, with which place they kept up a regular intercourse and commerce. In fact Lafitte boasted that he had made half of the merchants of that city rich. About the year 1819 the Governor of Galveston, a Mexican General, by the name of Longe, gave him a commission for the several vessels which he owned in partnership with those whom he had always retained in his employ; and Gen. Humbert, the subsequent governor, also gave him a commission for smaller boats, which he had constructed with a view of running far up the inland rivers. It is believed from this time that he kept up a regular life of robbing, smuggling and piracy, though he uniformly alleged that his depredations were committed alone on vessels sailing under the Spanish flag."

"About this time the Texas revolution burst forth, and many signal battles were fought on land and sea, until the lone star of the republic rose in refulgent beauty on the horizon of nations. Foremost in the cause of freedom was Lafitte. He commanded the "Jupiter," one of his own cruisers, the first vessel ever chartered by the new government, and by the very terror of his name, spread panic and dismay among the enemy. He was rewarded for his gallant services by being appointed governor of Galveston, a post of honor and distinction."

After the War Of 1812, Jim and Rezin traded in slaves. Bowie's adult behavior revealed an ambitious opportunist who did not permit matters of honesty and moral conduct to stand in the way of personal gain. Congress had abolished the African slave trade in 1808, but expanding agriculture in the Deep South created a greater demand for labor than could be met with domestic slaves. The result was a surge in slave runners, including the mercurial French privateer Jean Lafitte.

From his headquarters on the Texas coast, just west of the Sabine River on Galveston Island, Lafitte sold his pirated contraband to Bowie, who devised a plan to smuggle them into the Louisiana interior. He then claimed to have captured the illegals and turned them over to authorities for a reward. As per the law, officials then sold the slaves at auction, and Bowie bought them back for resale—this time with a legal title. Many slaves were involved, and Bowie accrued considerable profits during the two years he ran this scheme.

Lafitte also landed slaves at Bowie's Island in Vermilion Bay, and the Bowies took the slaves up the Vermilion and sold them in St. Landry Parish. When they had \$65,000 they quit the slave-trade business.

Bowie's most ambitious ploys stemmed from the chaotic state of Spanish land grants and land titles following the Louisiana Purchase. Compounding the problem, most of the Spanish records had been moved out of the country. Bowie saw an opportunity and began to personally forge Spanish land grants of prime properties in several parts of the state. He then boldly manufactured deeds of sale of the grants to himself.

The scale of the ruse was astounding, as he claimed up to 80,000 acres in Louisiana and almost as much again in Arkansas. Bowie's claims were immediately suspect when he attempted to formally register them, but his conniving and political influences kept the matter alive throughout the 1820s. He was even able to sell some of the counterfeit titles and reap a profit before the scheme eventually collapsed.

James' land speculation developed friendships with local wealthy planters. James became engaged to Cecelia Wells (born 1805), who died at age 24, on September 7, 1829, in Alexandria, two weeks before their wedding was to take place.



The James Long Expedition

The “Long Expedition” was an 1819 attempt to take control of Spanish Texas by filibusters. It was led by James Long and successfully established a small independent government, known as the Republic of Texas (distinct from the later Republic of Texas created by the Texas Revolution). Jim Bowie participated in this expedition. Beginning in 1810, Spanish territories in North and South America began to revolt. The Mexican War of Independence made it difficult for Spain to adequately protect its more remote territories such as Texas. Lured by the promise of free land and potential wealth, many men from the United States joined expeditions to try to take Texas from Spain.

(Note) A filibuster (from the Spanish filibustero), also known as a freebooter, is someone who engages in an unauthorized military expedition into a foreign country or territory to foster or support a political revolution or secession. The term is usually applied to United States citizens who incited insurrections across Latin America, particularly in the mid-19th century, usually with the goal of establishing an American-loyal regime that could later be annexed into the United States.

The expeditions were largely planned in New Orleans and variously wished to establish an independent republic in Texas or assist the revolutionaries fighting within Mexico. For the first nine years of the revolt, ownership of Texas was contested. The United States claimed that the Louisiana Purchase included all of Texas, while Spain believed the boundary rested at the Red River, leaving Texas under Spanish control.

In early 1819, Spain and the United States signed the Adams–Onís Treaty, which established the boundary of the Louisiana Purchase at the Sabine River. Many Americans were outraged that the United States had abandoned any claim to Texas. Rhetoric was especially high in Natchez, Mississippi. James Long, a doctor, was one of the most vehement voices against the treaty. Public sentiment in Natchez soon swung to military action to take back territory they were convinced belonged to them. Men began to gather in Natchez for an invasion of Texas.

They soon elected Long as their leader, although his only prior military experience had been as a surgeon in the War of 1812. The Natchez newspaper opined that "Never was [there] a more propitious moment for effecting their purpose." By the end of June, Long had received pledges for over \$500,000, and about 200 men, including **James Bowie** and Ben Milam, had gathered for the expedition.



Eli Harris led 120 men across the Sabine River to Nacogdoches. Long followed two weeks later with an additional 75 men. On June 22, the combined force declared a new government, with Long as president and a 21-member Supreme Council. The following day, they issued a declaration of independence, modeled on the United States Declaration of Independence.

The document cited several grievances, including "Spanish rapacity" and "odious tyranny" and promised religious freedom, freedom of the press, and free trade. The council also allocated 10 square miles of land to each member of the expedition, and authorized the sale of additional land to raise cash for the fledgling government. Within a month, the expedition had grown to 300 members.

The new government established trading outposts near Anahuac along the Trinity River and the Brazos River. They also began the first English-language newspaper ever published in Texas. The Texas Republican lasted only one month, August 1819.

Long also contacted Jean Lafitte, who ran a large smuggling operation on Galveston Island. His letter suggested that the new government establish an admiralty court at Galveston, and offered to appoint Lafitte governor of Galveston.

Unbeknownst to Long, Lafitte was actually a Spanish spy. While making numerous promises—and excuses—to Long, Lafitte gathered information about the expedition and passed it on to Spanish authorities. By July 16, the Spanish Consul in New Orleans had warned the viceroy in Mexico City that "I am fully persuaded that the present is the most serious expedition that has threatened the Kingdom".

With Lafitte's lack of assistance, the expedition soon ran low on provisions. Long dispersed his men to forage for food. Discipline began to break down, and many men, including Bowie, returned home. In early October, Lafitte reached an agreement with Long to make Galveston an official port for the new country and name Lafitte governor.

Within weeks, 500 Spanish troops arrived in Texas and marched on Nacogdoches. Long and his men withdrew. Over 40 men were captured. Long escaped to Natchitoches, Louisiana. Others fled to Galveston and settled along Bolivar Peninsula.

Long joined the refugees at Bolivar Peninsula on April 6, 1820, with more reinforcements. He continued to raise money to equip a second expedition. Fifty men attempted to join him from the United States, but they were arrested by American authorities as they tried to cross into Texas. The men who had joined Long were disappointed they were paid in scrip, and they gradually began to desert. By December 1820, Long commanded only 50 men.

With the aid of Ben Milam and others, Long revitalized the Supreme Council. He later broke with Milam, and the expedition led an uncertain existence until September 19, 1821, when Long and 52 men marched inland to capture Presidio La Bahía.

The town fell easily on October 4, but four days later Long was forced to surrender by Spanish troops under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Ignacio Pérez. He was taken prisoner and sent to Mexico City, where about six months later he was shot and killed by a guard — reportedly bribed to do so by José Félix Trespalacios.

U.S. Drops Claims to Texas

- U.S. claims Texas as part of Louisiana Purchase in 1803
- In 1819 the U.S. signs the Adams-Onís treaty with the U.S. giving up all claims to Texas
- It sets the border of the U.S. and Spain at the Sabine River
- In return, Spain gives Florida to the U.S.
- This treaty angers some Americans





The Bowie Knife – Sandbar Fight

Up until the time that the revolving pistol came into being around the year 1844, the Bowie Knife was the weapon of choice in close, challenging encounters. The Bowie Knife remains today as probably the best-known knife in history. It would be fitting to give the first-made such weapon its considered place recognition of originality. That place is on the banks of Bayou Boeuf (Beef) in an area once known as Bayou Boeuf Village. From Bunkie, drive west on Shirley Road. After crossing the bridge on Bayou Boeuf, turn left on the dirt road. In less than one minute the magnificent Live Oak Trees will appear in the distance. This place and area was the location of the Rezin Bowie Plantation in 1827 - the place where the first Bowie Knife was made.



Rezin Bowie Plantation Site

Jim Bowie also made enemies. Norris Wright, Rapides parish sheriff and local banker, refused to make a loan that Bowie sorely needed. In 1826 Bowie met Wright in Alexandria, where tempers flared and Wright fired point-blank at Bowie; but the bullet was deflected. After this encounter, Rezin gave his brother a large butcher-like hunting knife to carry. On September 19, 1827, near Natchez, Jim Bowie participated in the Sandbar Fight, which developed at a duel between Samuel Levi Wells III and Dr. Thomas Maddox.

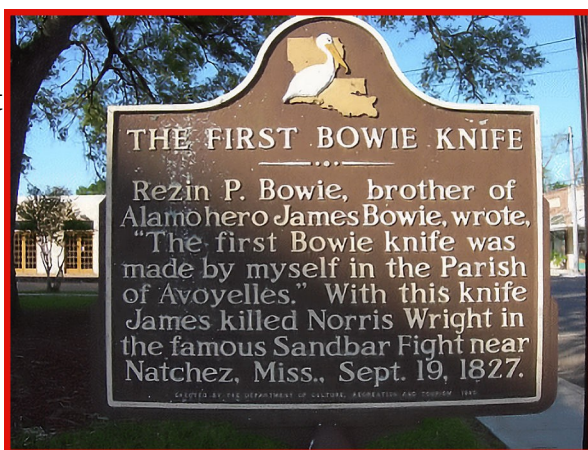
From: Handbook of Texas - BOWIE KNIFE:

In 1838 Rezin P. Bowie, brother of Alamo hero James Bowie, claimed that he made the first Bowie knife while the Bowies lived in Avoyelles Parish, Louisiana. He designed it as a hunting knife and gave it to James for protection after his brother had been shot in a fight. Blacksmith Jesse Clifft, who lived on Bayou Boeuf and was a close friend and neighbor of the Bowies in the 1820s, forged the knife according to Rezin Bowie's design. The original Bowie knife was like a butcher knife in profile, with a thin blade but no silver mounts. Bowie wore it in a silver-mounted black-leather sheath.

The Bowie knife gained widespread notoriety after the celebrated Sandbar Fight on September 19, 1827, near Natchez.

On that date Samuel Levi Wells and Dr. Thomas Maddox engaged in a duel on the first large sandbar above Natchez on the Mississippi state side of the river. After firing pistols at each other without effect, Wells and Maddox shook hands and started off the field. But members of the Maddox group suddenly fired at Wells's followers, who included James Bowie. Bowie fell, shot through a lung. An archenemy, Norris Wright, along with Alfred Blanchard, stabbed him repeatedly with swordcanes.

In a final effort Bowie raised himself, grabbed Wright, and sank the big knife into his assailant's heart, killing him instantly. Combatants and eyewitnesses described the "large butcher knife" in letters and interviews, and a legend began. Newspapers across the nation printed lurid and detailed stories of the Sandbar Fight. The public reveled in the prowess of James Bowie and his lethal weapon. In a day when pistols frequently misfired, the Bowie knife was a reliable and effective



backup weapon. As its popularity spread, schools were established, especially in the old Southwest, to teach the arts and dodges of Bowie knife fighting. The Red River Herald of Natchitoches, Louisiana, reported, "All the steel in the country it seemed was immediately converted into Bowie knives."



The Sandbar Fight



**The author's own "Timber Rattler" Bowie Knife
always worn when hiking in the Colorado Rockies**



Acadia Plantation

During the late 1820s Bowie's land speculations centered on the southern Louisiana parishes; he lived in New Orleans, enjoying its excitement and pleasures. James and his brothers Rezin and Stephen established the Arcadia sugar plantation of some 1,800 acres near the town of Thibodaux, where they set up the first steam-powered sugar mill in Louisiana.

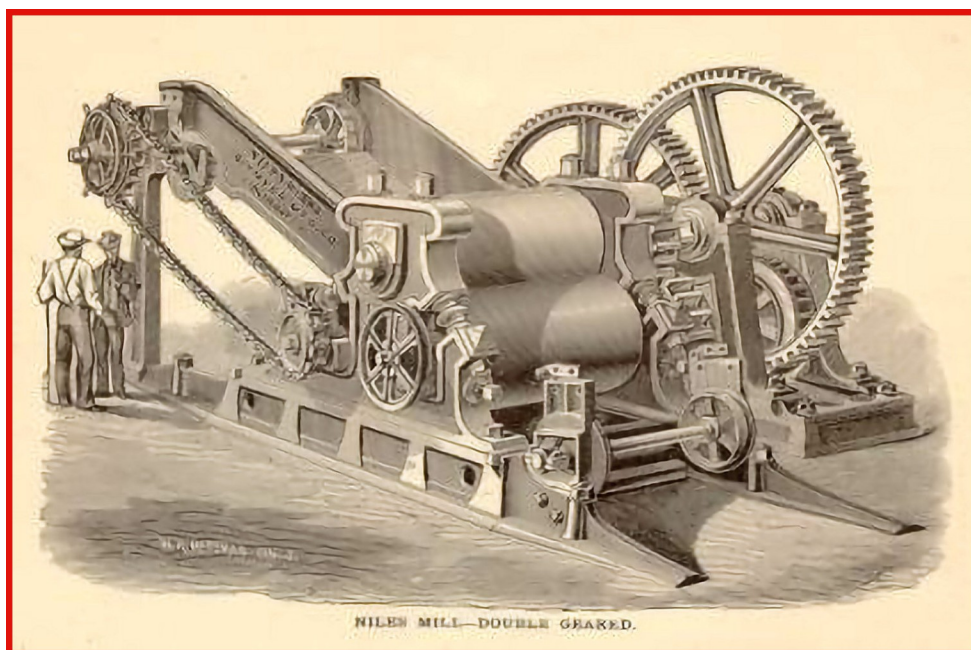
(Note) *Steam power, the first 19th-century innovation in sugar manufacture, was introduced to the Louisiana sugar industry with the importation of the state's first steam-powered cane mill. Steam engines gradually began supplanting animal power for mills. Steam vacuum pans, invented in England, were first used on several Louisiana plantations in the early 1800's.*

Early vacuum pans were closed vessels with double bottoms, in which cane juice was heated and evaporated under reduced pressure. This was more efficient than the open-kettle method and also yielded a higher quality sugar. The vacuum pan design was enlarged and improved by Norbert Rillieux (1806-1894), a free person of color born in New Orleans and educated in France. Rillieux's invention was the multiple-effect evaporation system, linking several vessels by a series of steam chambers so that each vessel after the first was heated by the vapor from the preceding one.

Rillieux's design significantly reduced fuel consumption and is considered the most important innovation in 19th-century sugar manufacturing technology. Multiple-effect evaporation was first used in Louisiana and then spread to other parts of the world.

Rezin Bowie was elected to the Louisiana state legislature. James spent little time at Arcadia, however; in the late 1820s he traveled to the eastern cities, as well as Arkansas and Mississippi. On February 12, 1831, the brothers sold Arcadia and other landholdings and eighty-two slaves to Natchez investors for \$90,000.

A working sugar plantation, Acadia Plantation is comprised of three major properties originally known as Acadia Plantation, St. Brigitte Plantation, and Evergreen Plantation. Acadia Plantation is located in Lafourche Parish, Evergreen Plantation in Terrebonne Parish, and St. Brigitte is partially located in Lafourche and Terrebonne Parishes.



The three plantations are consolidated farms which were assembled throughout the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries. Acadia Plantation was acquired in 1875 by Edward J. Gay through a sheriff's sale. It remained in the hands of his descendants, the Platers. St. Brigitte and Evergreen Plantations were added by direct purchase in 1903 and 1911, respectively.

All three properties were owned by well-known persons at one point or another. St. Brigitte Plantation was owned during portions of the 19th century by the family of Henry Schuyler Thibodaux, founder of the town of Thibodaux. Evergreen Plantation was owned by the family of Richard Ellis, the father-in-law of Confederate General Braxton Bragg who was also influential in state politics.

Acadia Plantation and portions of St. Brigitte Plantation were owned by the Bowie family, whose members included Jim Bowie who died at the Alamo; by Philip Barton Key, a nephew of Francis Scott Key; by John Nelson and Andrew J. Donelson, of a wellknown Nashville, Tennessee Family; and by Edward J. Gay, who served Louisiana in the United States Congress in the 1880s and who was a prominent Louisiana businessman and sugar cane planter; and Andrew Price, Gay's son-in-law, who also served in Congress in the late 1880s and 1890s.

The present Acadia Plantation residence is comprised of several old Creole cottages which were joined and remodeled in 1890 to become the stately residence of Representative Andrew and Mrs. Anna Gay Price. Anna Gay Butler Plater, the favorite niece of Anna Gay Price, inherited the plantation after Mrs. Price's death in 1939. The plantation was concurrently inherited by Anna's husband Richard C. Plater, Sr., as well as their children, Richard C. Plater Jr. and Louise Plater Hale.

The Acadia property was primarily cultivated for sugar cane agriculture, although there are extensive woodlands and farm scattered about the property. Over the years the Plater family leased plots of Acadia land to tenants for such crop production as sugar cane and corn. In the 1940s, Acadia Subdivision was created from plantation lands, and part of the property was sold to the state of Louisiana for a junior college, Nicholls State, which ultimately became a four-year college and then a university.

(Note) In 2010 Acadia Plantation was demolished and a plaque was placed on Hwy 1 next to Nicholls State University in memory of the plantation. Construction crews worked from the inside out as they dismantled portions of the historic plantation home. The land and

home was purchased by Jake Giardina and partner Ron Adams in 2003 from the Plater family as part of a 3,000-acre transaction. The home's future had been a topic of local debate since that time, although there have been no organized attempts to save it. It was listed on the National Register of Historical Places.[3] The 3,400-acre plot of land is now a subdivision which includes a mix of stores, restaurants and homes to the people of Thibodaux. The 132-acres of Acadia Plantation is now developed into residential homes and businesses. The style and arrangement is similar to those found in the New Orleans French Quarter. A grammar school, children museum, doctors office are among the developments of the subdivision



Acadia Plantation - Jim Bowie Oak

Life for enslaved African-Americans was difficult in Louisiana. The sub-tropical climate, particularly the intense heat and humidity that characterizes much of the year, along with the epidemic diseases such as cholera and yellow fever, took their toll on the overall health of Louisiana's African-Americans during antebellum times. A seemingly endless cycle of planting, hoeing, weeding, harvesting, and grinding comprised the work routine on Louisiana's sugarcane plantations

during the 19th century. Slaves often worked in gangs under the direction of drivers, who were typically fellow slaves that supervised work in the fields.



Evergreen Plantation Slave Houses



Galveston Slave Trade



Move To Texas

Just when Bowie first entered Mexican Texas is unknown. He possibly was recruited in 1819 in New Orleans with Benjamin R. Milam and others for the James Long Expedition. If he did, he was not among those captured when 500 Spanish troops arrived in Texas and marched on Nacogdoches. (James Long escaped to Natchitoches, Louisiana. Others fled to Galveston and settled along Bolivar Peninsula.)

On January 1, 1830, Bowie and a friend left Thibodeaux, Louisiana for Texas. They stopped at Nacogdoches, at Jared E. Groce's farm on the Brazos River, and in San Felipe, where Bowie presented a letter of introduction to empresario Stephen F. Austin from Thomas F. McKinney, one of the "Old Three Hundred" colonists. On February 20 Bowie and his friend Isaac Donoho took the oath of allegiance to Mexico.



Bowie, age thirty-four, was at his prime. He was well traveled, convivial, loved music, and was generous. He also was ambitious and scheming; he played cards for money, and lived in a world of debt. He reached San Antonio with William H. Wharton and Mrs. Wharton, Isaac Donoho, Caiaphas K. Ham, and several slaves. They carried letters of introduction to two wealthy and influential Mexicans, Juan Martín de Veramendi and Juan N. Seguin.

Juan Martín del Carmen de Veramendi (Beramendi), businessman, public figure, and governor of Coahuila and Texas

(Mexican territories), was born in San Fernando de Béxar (San Antonio) on December 17, 1778, the son of Spaniard Fernando and Canary Islands descendant María Josefa Granados. He married Josefa Navarro; they became the parents of seven children. Along with his merchant business, he also owned farmland and operated a stock ranch on the eve of the Mexican War of Independence. Veramendi was first alcalde (mayor) of Bexar (pronounced 'Bear') in 1824 and 1825. He was elected vice governor of Coahuila and Texas on September 6, 1830, and was confirmed by the legislature on January 4, 1831, but remained in Texas to continue his commercial activities. That same year, his daughter Ursula María, married James Bowie. Bowie and Veramendi formed a partnership to establish cotton mills in Saltillo and fur trapping, although neither plan came to fruition. When governor José María Letona died less than two years into his term of office, Veramendi was called to Saltillo to serve on an interim capacity. He and his family arrived at the end of 1832, a period of rising political tensions. During his term, an anti-Saltillo group of legislators from Texas, Parras, and Monclova managed to pass legislation moving the state capital from Saltillo to the Monclova.



Bowie's party continued on to Saltillo, the state capital of Coahuila and Texas. There Bowie learned that a Mexican law of 1828 offered its citizens eleven-league grants in Texas for \$100 to \$250 each. (A league was 4,428.4 acres.) Bowie urged Mexicans to apply for the eleven-league grants, which he purchased from them. He left Saltillo with fifteen or sixteen of these grants, and continued to encourage speculation in Texas lands. His activities irritated Stephen F. Austin, who hesitated to approve lands Bowie wanted to locate in the Austin colony but eventually allowed the tracts there.



*co poblarlo y cultivarlo, según lo pre-
venido por la ley, y satisfacer las condi-
ciones de ella señaladas, y a los plazos q.
prefijan: Que en ello recibre gracia,
y merced.*
Placoy docho a 13 de Febrero de 1830.
James Bowie

JAMES BOWIE'S MEXICAN LAND GRANT APPLICATION 1830

In San Antonio Bowie posed as a man of wealth, attached himself to the wealthy Veramendi family, and was baptized into the Catholic Church, sponsored by the Veramendis. In the autumn of 1830 he accompanied the family to Saltillo, and on October 5 officially became a Mexican citizen. The citizenship was contingent on his establishing wool and cotton mills in Coahuila (In Mexico south of the Rio Grande).

Through his friend Angus McNeill of Natchez Louisiana, he purchased a textile mill for \$20,000.

(Note) *Angus McNeill, land speculator and planter, was born in North Carolina in 1806. He was a resident of Natchez, Mississippi, on February 4, 1829. McNeill became acquainted with James Bowie in Mississippi in 1826. A manifest of Bowie's property, drawn up as part of a dowry contract signed by Bowie at San Antonio on April 22, 1831, included \$20,000 held by McNeill for the purchase of textile machinery in Boston.*

(Note) *Bowie was elected a commander of the Texas Rangers in 1830, with the rank of colonel. Although the Rangers would not be organized officially until 1835, Stephen F. Austin had founded the group by hiring 30 men to keep the peace and protect the colonists from attacks by hostile Native Americans. Other areas assembled similar volunteer militias. Bowie commanded a group of volunteers.*





Maria Ursula de Veramendi and Jim Bowie

On April 25, 1831, in San Antonio, Bowie married Ursula de Vera-mendi. He had appeared before the mayor, declared his age as thirty-two (he was actually thirty-five), and pledged to pay Ursula a dowry of \$15,000. He valued his properties at \$222,800. But the titles to his 60,000 arpents (*a French unit of land area, about 1 acre*) of Arkansas land, valued at \$30,000, were fraudulent.

Walker and Wilkins of Natchez owed Bowie \$45,000 for his interest in Arcadia Plantation, and had given McNeil \$20,000 for the Saltillo mill. Bowie borrowed \$1,879 from his father-in-law and \$750 from Ursula's grandmother for a honeymoon trip to New Orleans and Natchez. The Bowies settled in San Antonio.

Veramendi family tradition says Bowie spent little time at home. He apparently became fascinated by tales of the "lost" Los Almagres Mine, said to be west of San Antonio near the ruin of Santa Cruz de San Sabá Mission.

(Note) *LOS ALMAGRES MINE.* An expedition seeking a site for an Apache mission in 1753 led to the discovery of Los Almagres Mine in what is now Llano County. No valuable ore was found, but interest in the hill containing gossan refused to die. An Apache mission and a presidio were established on the San Saba River near the site of present-day Menard. The presidio captain, Diego Ortiz Parrilla, obtained ore samples and smelted them at his post. He calculated a yield of 1½ ounces of silver from seventy-five pounds of ore. After destruction of the San Sabá Mission by hostile Indians in March 1758, Ortiz Parrilla was reassigned. The mine was never officially opened.

Stephen F. Austin, on his first trip to Texas, heard from Erasmo Seguín that there was a rich silver mine on the San Saba River and a gold mine on the Llano. Hearing again in Mexico City of the unworked ore deposit called Los Almagres "in the territory of Sansava," he sent soldiers to inspect it. They probably went to the wrong place. In 1829 the mythical "lost" silver mine of San Sabá began appearing on Austin's maps.

James and Rezin Bowie, on their sallies into the Hill Country, reinforced the legend. Los Almagres was transformed into the "lost San Saba mine," then the "lost Bowie mine." After 1895 some prankster (presumably) appended the word mine to the Bowie name on the presidio's stone gatepost at Menard.

Today, the legend is the focus of an annual Menard festival called Jim Bowie Days, which, like Austin's pamphlet, has a promotional intent. The fact is that the Los Almagres mine that inspired the legend was at another location more than seventy miles away.



Bowie obtained permission from Mexican authorities for an expedition into Indian country financed by Veramendi, and on November 2, 1831, he left San Antonio with his brother Rezin and nine others. On the nineteenth they learned that a large Indian war party was following them, and six miles from San Saba, Bowie camped in an oak grove. An attempt to parley failed. Bowie's men fought for their lives for thirteen hours. The Indians finally drew off, reportedly leaving forty dead and thirty wounded. Bowie lost one man killed and several wounded. The party returned to San Antonio.

On January 23, 1832, Bowie made another foray to the west. He now carried the title of "colonel" of citizen Texas Rangers. He left Gonzales with twenty-six men to scout the headwaters of the Colorado for Tawakonis and other hostile Indians. After a fruitless search of 2½ months, he returned home.

In July, in Natchez, he learned that Jose de las Piedras, Mexican commander at Nacogdoches, had visited the towns of Anahuac and Velasco to quiet the antagonisms between the government and the mainly Anglo citizens. Upon his return, Piedras demanded that all citizens in his jurisdiction surrender their arms. The colonists rejected the demand. Bowie hurried to Nacogdoches, and on August 1 accompanied James W. Bullock and 300 armed men in their siege of the garrison there.

Piedras chose to fight. During the night he evacuated his men and marched south, having lost thirty-three killed. Bowie and eighteen men ambushed the Mexican column, and Piedras fled. Bowie marched the soldiers back to Nacogdoches.

(Note) José de las Piedras was commander of the Mexican forces in Nacogdoches from 1827 to 1832. On September 27, 1827, he relieved Mariano Cosío in command of the contingent of the Twelfth Permanent Battalion of the Mexican Army that occupied Nacogdoches from the spring of 1827 until August 2, 1832. He was fairly successful in his difficult task of controlling a predominantly Anglo-American town because he paid little attention to the civil government and confined his efforts to the military command. On May 21, 1832, Piedras was ordered by the general commandant, José Mariano Guerra, to report to Anahuac to put an end to the Anahuac Disturbances, which were the culmination of the Texan colonists' grievances against John Davis Bradburn.

Piedras arrived in Anahuac on July 1, 1832, placed Juan N. Cortina in charge of the Mexican garrison, and returned to Nacogdoches soon thereafter. His support of Anastasio Bustamante and his refusal to adhere to Antonio López de Santa Anna's Plan of Jalapa resulted in his expulsion from East Texas in the battle of Nacogdoches on August 2, 1832. Piedras and his men left Nacogdoches on the night of August 2, but were intercepted the next day on the Angelina River. As Piedras took refuge in John M. Durst's home, his men betrayed him, and he and 300 troops were escorted back to Nacogdoches. Piedras eventually was taken to Stephen F. Austin at San Felipe, where he received parole. He then rejoined his family in Matamoros. In the struggle in Tampico between the Federalists and the Bustamante government, the Centralist forces under Piedras were defeated, and he was killed in April 1839.



An Eventful Year

On March 9, 1833, Monclova replaced Saltillo as the state capital. When the two towns raised small armies to contest the change, Bowie favored Monclova (in the northern Mexican state of Coahuila). On one occasion when the forces confronted each other, he rode out and tried to precipitate a battle. He believed that the fortunes of Texas land speculators lay with Monclova.

In September, Juan Martin Veramendi, his wife Josefa, and Ursula Bowie, age 22, died of cholera at Monclova. Ursula died on the tenth. A Bowie relative and Veramendi family tradition say Ursula and one child died in the epidemic. A Bowie family friend reported that Ursula had two children, but both died young (Marie Elve Bowie and James Veramendi Bowie). Bowie was ill with yellow fever in Natchez and unaware of the deaths. On October 31 he dictated his last will, in which he bequeathed half of his estate to his brother Rezin and half to his sister Martha Sterrett and her husband.

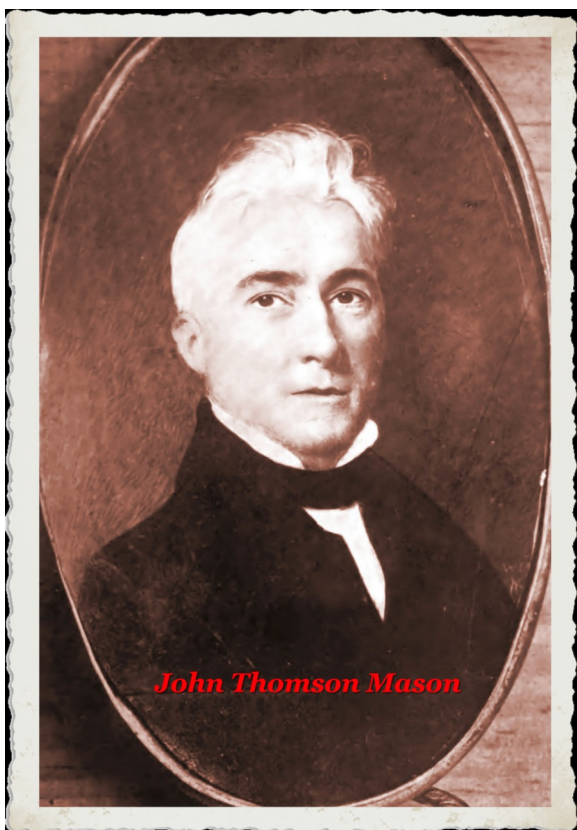
(Note) Seven cholera pandemics have occurred in the past 200 years, with the first pandemic originating in India in 1817. Second, 1829–1837. A second cholera pandemic reached Russia, Hungary (about 100,000 deaths) and Germany in 1831; it killed 130,000 people in Egypt that year.

In 1832 it reached London and the United Kingdom (where more than 55,000 people died) and Paris. In London, the disease claimed 6,536 victims and came to be known as "King Cholera"; in Paris, 20,000 died (of a population of 650,000), and total deaths in France amounted to 100,000. In 1833, a cholera epidemic killed many Pomo people which were a Native American tribe.

The epidemic reached Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia and New York in the same year, and the Pacific coast of North America by 1834. In the center of the country, it spread through the cities linked by the rivers and steamboat traffic. The epidemic of cholera had reached its peak. Cholera afflicted Mexico's populations in 1833 and 1850, prompting officials to quarantine some populations and fumigate buildings, particularly in major urban centers, but nonetheless the epidemics were disastrous.



Mexican laws passed in 1834 and 1835 opened the floodgates to wholesale speculation in Texas lands, and Texas-Coahuila established land commissions to speed sales, since the state treasury was empty. Bowie was appointed a commissioner to promote settlement in John T. Mason's purchase. The governor also was empowered to hand out 400-league parcels for frontier defense. The sale of these large tracts angered some colonists, who also resented a rumored plan by speculators to make San Antonio the capital. They questioned Bowie's handling of Mason's 400-league purchase. One traveler met Bowie and Mason en route from Matamoros to Monclova with \$40,000 in specie to pay the last installment on Mason's land. Bowie also sold Mason land certificates to his friends in Natchez.



John Thomson Mason

(Note) John Thomson Mason was an American lawyer, United States marshal, Secretary of Michigan Territory from 1830 through 1831, land agent, and an important figure in the Texas Revolution. In 1830, Mason became a scripholder for the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company in New York. The land company's purpose was to assume the land holdings of Texas empresarios Lorenzo de Zavala, David G. Burnet, and Joseph Vehlein which comprised approximately 20 million acres. While in Mexico City on the land company's behalf, Mason discovered that the Law of April 6, 1830 prevented the transfer of Mexican land to foreign companies. On a subsequent trip to Mexico City in 1833, Mason was able to secure a repeal of the law's stipulation that forbade colonization in Mexico from the United States. Once

he accomplished this, Mason resigned from the land company to promote his personal Texas landholdings. Mason continued to expand his landholdings by purchasing 300 leagues from the Mexican government and 100 leagues from individual landholders.

Mason's prosperous land business was soon compromised when his large land grants were cancelled by the Provisional government of Texas. The revolutionary government repudiated the sales of land made in 1834 by the Mexican state of Coahuila y Tejas, going so far as to name Mason's contract as annulled by them in the First Texan Constitution. Mason remained in Nacogdoches for most of the duration of the Texas Revolution. He continued to support the Texas Revolution by paying \$1,000 for the schooner Liberty for the Texas Navy and advancing \$500 for the expenses of the schooner Brutus. On March 2, 1836, the Republic of Texas declared its independence and organized a government. The following year, Mason attended a session of Congress of the Republic of Texas in Houston, the capital of Texas. After the Texas Revolution, Mason moved to New York, but returned to Texas multiple times during the 1840s. He traveled to Texas for the last time in 1849. Mason died of cholera on May 3, 1850, at Tremont House in Galveston.

In May 1835, Santa Anna abolished the Coahuila-Texas government. Bowie fled to Nacogdoches. On June 22 he wrote a friend that all communication between Mexico and Texas had been cut, that troops were boarding ships at Matamoros for the Texas coast, and that Mexican forces were en route from Saltillo toward the Rio Grande. In July, Bowie and others in San Felipe and Nacogdoches were beating the drum for war. Bowie led a small group of Texas "militia" to San Antonio and seized a stack of muskets in the Mexican armory there.





In July 31, 1835, William Barret Travis wrote Bowie that Texans were divided and that the Peace Party appeared the stronger. Travis was a leader of the War Party. Bowie had hired Travis as early as 1833 in San Felipe to prepare land papers, and in June 1834 Travis represented Bowie and Isaac Donoho in a case filed by Francis W. Johnson. Travis also did legal work for Bowie's friend Jesse Clifft, a blacksmith who is often credited with making the first Bowie knife at Resin Bowie's plantation in Louisiana. The War Party sought military support among the Indian tribes in East Texas. On August 3, Bowie reported on a recent tour of several villages where he found many of the Indians on drunken sprees and all reluctant to cooperate.

On September 1, Austin arrived home from a long imprisonment in Mexico City. On October 3, Santa Anna abolished all state legislatures in Mexico. After being elected to command the volunteer army, Austin issued a call to arms. On October 16 his forces camped on Cibolo Creek twenty miles from San Antonio. Bowie arrived with a small party of friends, principally from Louisiana, and Austin placed him on his staff as a colonel. Travis and others joined the army. Gen. Sam Houston, in command of the Texas regular army, arrived and condemned the idea of attacking Bexar.

He maintained that Austin's army, weak and ill-trained, should fall back to the Guadalupe or Colorado river. Bowie and Capt. James W. Fannin, at Austin's orders, scouted south of Bexar for a new campsite. On their way, Bowie drove off a Mexican patrol. On October 26, Austin moved 400 men to San Francisco de la Espada Mission. Bowie took ninety-two horsemen and inspected the area of Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña Mission, near Bexar. At dawn on the twenty-eighth, in a heavy fog, the Mexicans attacked Bowie with 300 cavalry and 100 infantry. Bowie fought for three hours. "Bowie was a born leader," Noah Smithwick wrote years later of the Battle Of Conception, "never needlessly spending a bullet or imperiling a life."

His voice is still ringing in my old deaf ears as he repeatedly admonished us. Keep under cover boys and reserve your fire; we haven't a man to spare." Bowie captured a six-pounder cannon and thirty muskets. He lost one man, while the Mexicans left sixteen on the field and carried off as many.

Bowie, Fannin, and the detachment remained in the immediate area south of Bexar while Austin moved his army and established headquarters on the Alamo Canal.

(Note) The Battle of Concepción was fought on October 28, 1835, between Mexican troops under Colonel Domingo Ugartechea and Texian insurgents led by James Bowie and James Fannin. The 30-minute engagement, which historian J. R. Edmondson describes as "the first major engagement of the Texas Revolution", occurred on the grounds of Mission Concepción, 2 miles south of what is now Downtown San Antonio, Texas.

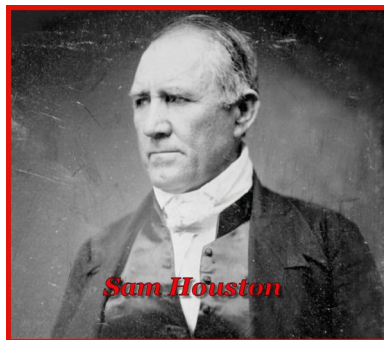
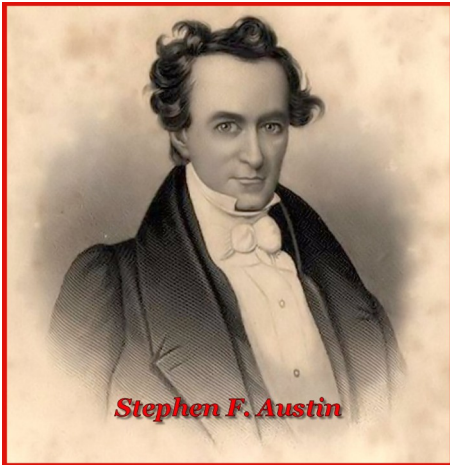
On October 13, the newly created Texian Army under Stephen F. Austin had marched towards Bexar, where General Martín Perfecto de Cos commanded the remaining Mexican soldiers in Texas. On October 27, Austin sent Bowie and Fannin, with 90 soldiers, to find a defensible spot near Bexar for the Texian Army to rest.

After choosing a site near Mission Concepción, the scouting party camped for the night and sent a courier to notify Austin. After learning that the Texian Army was divided, Cos sent Ugartechea with 275 soldiers to attack the Texans camped at Concepción.

The Texans took cover in a horseshoe-shaped gully; their good defensive position, longer firing range, and better ammunition helped them to repel several Mexican attacks, and the Mexican soldiers retreated just 30 minutes before the remainder of the Texian Army arrived. Historians estimate that between 14 and 76 Mexican soldiers were killed, while only one Texian soldier died.



Battle Of Concepcion Oct 28, 1835



Three days after the battle Austin sent Travis and fifty men to capture some 900 horses being driven south to Laredo, and asked Bowie to create a diversion to cover the escape of Mexican soldiers who wanted to desert. Bowie made a display of force, yet the soldiers failed to come out. On October 31 Bowie notified Gen. Martín Perfecto de Cos that he would join Austin in an attack on Bexar. On November 1 Austin demanded that Cos surrender; he refused. Austin hesitated. On November 2, Austin's officers voted 44 to 3 against storming Bexar. Bowie did not vote.

He asked the same day to be relieved of command and again tried to resign on November 6. He had earlier served in a volunteer Texas Ranger group, fought Indians, and was the type of officer who served the community in time of need. He apparently had little interest in a formal command. Provisional governor Henry Smith and Houston wanted him to raise a volunteer group and attack Matamoros, but the General Council declared that Bowie was not "an officer of the government nor army."

Bowie left the army for a brief trip to San Felipe in mid-November. He was back in San Antonio on November 18, and on the twenty-sixth he and thirty horsemen rode out to check on a Mexican pack-train near town, while Burleson followed with 100 infantry. Bowie met the train and charged its cavalry escort. He fought off several assaults by Mexican infantry, and the Mexicans retired with the loss of sixty men. As the pack-train was loaded with bales of grass for the garrison livestock, the clash was called the Grass Fight.

(Note) The Grass Fight, on November 26, 1835, became the last engagement in the siege of San Antonio before the final Texan assault on the town. In November Col. Domingo de Ugartechea had left San Antonio with a cavalry escort to guide reinforcements to the garrison commanded by Gen. Martín Perfecto de Cos. After the departure of Stephen F. Austin to represent Texas in the United States, the Texan army elected as commander Col. Edward Burleson, who continued to harass Cos while scouting for the return of Ugartechea.

On November 26 Erastus "Deaf" Smith rode into the Texas camp in mid-morning with information that Mexican cavalry with pack animals were approaching San Antonio. Texas soldiers wondered if the column might be carrying pay for the Mexican army.

Burleson ordered James Bowie and forty cavalry to delay the Mexicans' progress. A hundred Texas infantry under William H. Jack followed Bowie to seize the supply train. The two cavalry forces of about equal size began to skirmish west of town and soon fought on foot from ravines near Alazan Creek. Cos sent about fifty infantry with an artillery piece to help oppose the Texan attack. The Texas infantry broke out of a crossfire from the two Mexican units and pushed them back. Mexican troops counterattacked four times until Texas reinforcements under James Swisher caused them to pull back into the town. Texas losses included four wounded, while Mexican losses numbered three dead and fourteen wounded, mostly among the cavalry. When the Texans brought in forty captured pack animals they discovered their prizes carried only grass to feed army animals.

Bowie subsequently proceeded to Goliad to determine conditions there. During his absence, Burleson attacked Bexar on December 5 and forced the Mexican garrison to surrender and retire to the Rio Grande. The volunteers left for home. Bowie received a letter from Houston dated December 17, suggesting a campaign against Matamoros. If that was impossible, Houston suggested, Bowie could perhaps organize a guerilla force to harass the Mexican army. The Matamoros Expedition was approved, but the issue of command was muddled by the political rivalry between Governor Smith and the council, and Houston soon found another assignment for Bowie.





The Alamo

On January 19, 1836, Bowie arrived in Bexar from Goliad with a detachment of thirty men. He carried orders from Houston to demolish the fortifications there, though some historians believe these orders were discretionary. The situation was grim. Col. James C. Neill, commander of a contingent of seventy-eight men at the Alamo, stated that his men lacked clothing and pay and talked of leaving. Mexican families were leaving Bexar. Texas volunteers had carried off most of the munitions and supplies for the Matamoros expedition.

(Note) By the late 1820s, the third most important port in Mexico was Matamoros, in the state of Tamaulipas. Located on the Rio Grande, approximately 31 miles from the Gulf of Mexico, the bustling port served much of northeastern Mexico and received a significant amount of international traffic from the United States and Europe. The Matamoros Expedition was a planned 1836 invasion of the Mexican port town of Matamoros by rebellious Texians.

As the Mexican government transitioned from federalism to a centralized government in 1835, many federalists offered armed opposition. In Mexican Texas, settlers launched a full rebellion, known as the Texas Revolution, in October. By the end of the year 1835, the Texians had expelled all Mexican soldiers from their territory. Confident that there would be no more fighting within their lands, Texans began looking for ways to extend the fight.

Houston delegated the task to James Bowie but Bowie did not receive his orders for several weeks. The Matamoros Expedition failed and was abandoned due to disputes of leadership between James Fannin, Stephen Austin and Sam Houston.

On February 2, 1836 Bowie wrote Governor Smith, urging that Bexar be held because it was a strategic "frontier picket guard." (A "picket," or sentinel, served as the eyes and ears of the army. Posted as close to the enemy as possible, the picket was responsible for noting any movements of the enemy and alerting the main line or camp of an enemy attack. An additional duty of the picket was to prevent desertion from his own ranks.) Travis, promoted to lieutenant colonel, arrived with thirty men on February 3; David Crockett rode in with twelve men on the eighth. The garrison had some 150 men. On February 11, Neill gave his command to Travis and left.

The volunteers preferred Bowie as commander and insisted on holding an election on February 12. The volunteer vote placed Bowie in command, and he celebrated by getting drunk. While under the influence Bowie ordered certain prisoners set free and paraded the volunteers under arms in Bexar. Travis took his regulars from the Alamo to the Medina River to escape implication in the disgraceful affair. On February 13 Bowie and Travis worked out a compromise giving Travis command of the regulars, Bowie command of the volunteers, and both men joint authority over garrison orders and correspondence.

(Note) A renowned adventurer and duelist, Bowie was medicating an advancing case of tuberculosis by frequent recourse to the bottle. Irritated at Travis' attempt to assert overall command authority by virtue of his status as an officer of the regular Texian forces, the ailing Bowie actively interfered in the functioning of the command. On February 13 the post adjutant complained in official correspondence that Bowie had sought to assume overall command by his own authority, ordered the garrison to parade through the streets of San Antonio while under arms, and used their intimidating presence to compel the release of prisoners from the municipal juzgado (jail). The adjutant reported that Bowie and many of the troops were drunk at the time of these disturbances. An indignant Travis informed the provisional government that he refused to be "held responsible for the drunken irregularities of any man."

The quick-tempered attorney-soldier was so disgusted with Bowie's drunken intrigues and rivalry that he assembled his 50 regulars and marched them out of the Alamo to establish a new camp located

several miles distant on the Medina River on February 13. Although Travis and his men remained there only a day or two at most before returning to San Antonio, it was still an ill considered action on his part, for there had already been a spate of warnings concerning enemy activity along the Rio Grande. The division of the Alamo's garrison in the face of a possible invasion of Texas was itself an index to the virulency of the liquor-fueled antipathy between Travis and Bowie.

On February 23 Bowie and Travis learned that some 1,500 Mexican cavalymen were advancing on Bexar, and sent a dispatch to Goliad asking Fannin for help. Within hours the Mexicans marched into Bexar and requested a parley.

Without consulting Travis, Bowie asked for and received terms: the Texans must surrender. These terms were rejected. On February 24 Bowie, who was suffering from a disease "of a peculiar nature," which has been diagnosed as pneumonia or typhoid pneumonia but probably was advanced tuberculosis, collapsed, ending his active participation in commanding the garrison.

Most historians no longer believe that he fell from a platform while attempting to position a cannon. He was confined to a cot and urged the volunteers to follow Travis. He was occasionally carried outside to visit his men.

The quick-tempered attorney-soldier was so disgusted with Bowie's drunken intrigues and rivalry that he assembled his 50 regulars and marched them out of the Alamo to establish a new camp located several miles distant on the Medina River on February 13. Although Travis and his men remained there only a day or two at most before returning to San Antonio, it was still an ill considered action on his part, for there had already been a spate of warnings concerning enemy activity along the Rio Grande. The division of the Alamo's garrison in the face of a possible invasion of Texas was itself an index to the virulency of the liquor-fueled antipathy between Travis and Bowie.

Even after Travis' men rejoined the garrison the excessive drinking continued. Most of the troops were quartered in town in private lodgings and not within the walls of the post proper. This made it

virtually impossible for their officers to maintain proper discipline and control their access to liquor. Such laxity came very close to destroying the Alamo's defenders before they could ever mount its ramparts. The speed of the Mexican advance northward into Texas took Travis and his superiors by surprise, for he had persistently discounted reports that enemy troops had crossed the Rio Grande as early as February 18 and were closing on San Antonio. A cavalry vanguard had reached the Medina River ford to the west of town by the night of the 20th. When Santa Anna and the lead division of his army arrived at the river at 1:45 PM on the 21st, he found Brigadier General Joaquin Ramirez y Sesma and his horsemen awaiting further orders.

Sesma might have already sent his cavalry forward to scout the town and its approaches, but he had cautiously chosen to keep his dragoons on the west bank of the Medina. Soon after Santa Anna's arrival on the scene, he met with local sympathizers from San Antonio who informed him that the "Norte Americanos" were preparing to hold a grand fandango that night in celebration of George Washington's birthday. He quickly ordered Sesma to take his best mounted men across the Medina to mount a surprise attack upon San Antonio in a bid to catch the rebels by surprise. A heavy rain swept down on the ford that afternoon and rising water kept the cavalry from crossing until early on the morning of the 22nd. At that time the dragoons were barely 25 miles from the Alamo. When Sesma's dragoons finally cleared the flood-swollen ford and neared San Antonio in the predawn darkness of February 23, the Texians were either still carousing in the cantinas or seeking to sleep off the night's debauchery.

Travis had prudently posted a sentinel in the belltower of San Fernando church that morning after daybreak, and at about 10 AM he had seen Sesma's cavalry moving through the brush along Alazan Creek and quickly gave the alarm. None of the enemy horsemen were still visible from the tower by the time Travis arrived at the lookout post, and most of the men who had been aroused by the alarm bell's strident peals went back to bed or bottle in disgust at what they dismissed as a false alarm.

Travis wisely sent two riders westward from town to scout the muddy road which led ultimately southward to the Rio Grande. It was nearing noon when they spurred their mounts eastward in a hasty retreat after nearly blundering into some of the breastplated enemy dragoons. Thus it was not until almost midday that the Texians finally took alarm at the presence of Mexican cavalry on the outskirts of town and began a precipitate retreat to the walls of the Alamo. Even then, Sesma's mere presence in the area helped to impair the ultimate effectiveness of the garrison's defense, for he later reported that upon entering town at 3 PM, his men seized 50 rifles which had been left behind by fleeing Texians in their haste to reach safety.

Surely Travis and Bowie knew fully well the weakness of their men when it came to drinking. It was their solemn obligation as commanders to enforce discipline and curb drunkenness among their troops. In this they failed miserably. The key to this failure lay in James Bowie.

On February 23, approximately 1,500 Mexicans marched into San Antonio de Béxar as the first step in a campaign to retake Texas. For the next 10 days, the two armies engaged in several skirmishes with minimal casualties. Aware that his garrison could not withstand an attack by such a large force, Travis wrote multiple letters pleading for more men and supplies from Texas and from the United States, but the Texians were reinforced by fewer than 100 men because the United States had a treaty with Mexico, and supplying men and weapons would have been an overt act of war.

Few arrangements had been made for a potential siege. One group of Texians scrambled to herd cattle into the Alamo, while others scrounged for food in the recently abandoned houses. Several members of the garrison who had been living in town brought their families with them when they reported to the Alamo. Among these were Almaron Dickinson, who brought his wife Susanna and their infant daughter Angelina; Bowie, who was accompanied by his deceased wife's cousins, Gertrudis Navarro and Juana Navarro Alsbury, and Alsbury's young son; and Gregorio Esparza, whose family climbed through the window

of the Alamo chapel after the Mexican army arrived. Other members of the garrison failed to report for duty; most of the men working outside Béxar did not try to sneak past Mexican lines.

By late afternoon Béxar was occupied by about 1,500 Mexican soldiers. When the Mexican troops raised a blood-red flag signifying no quarter (*to show no mercy*), Travis responded with a blast from the Alamo's largest cannon. Believing that Travis had acted hastily, Bowie sent Jameson to meet with Santa Anna. Travis was angered that Bowie had acted unilaterally and sent his own representative, Captain Albert Martin. Both emissaries met with Colonel Juan Almonte and José Bartres. According to Almonte, the Texians asked for an honorable surrender but were informed that any surrender must be unconditional. On learning this, Bowie and Travis mutually agreed to fire the cannon again.

The first night of the siege was relatively quiet. Over the next few days, Mexican soldiers established artillery batteries, initially about 1,000 feet from the south and east walls of the Alamo. A third battery was positioned southeast of the fort. Each night the batteries inched closer to the Alamo walls. During the first week of the siege more than 200 cannonballs landed in the Alamo plaza. At first, the Texians matched Mexican artillery fire, often reusing the Mexican cannonballs. On February 26 Travis ordered the artillery to conserve powder and shot.

Two notable events occurred on Wednesday, February 24. At some point that day, Bowie collapsed from illness, leaving Travis in sole command of the garrison. Late that afternoon, two Mexican scouts became the first fatalities of the siege. The following morning, 200–300 Mexican soldiers crossed the San Antonio River and took cover in abandoned shacks near the Alamo walls. Several Texians ventured out to burn the huts while Texians within the Alamo provided cover fire. After a two-hour skirmish, the Mexican troops retreated to Béxar. Six Mexican soldiers were killed and four others were wounded. No Texians were injured.

A "blue norther" blew in on February 25, dropping the temperature to 39 °F. Neither army was prepared for the cold temperatures. Texian attempts to gather firewood were thwarted by Mexican troops. On the evening of February 26 Colonel Juan Bringas engaged several Texans who were burning more huts. According to historian J.R. Edmondson, one Texian was killed.

Four days later, Texans shot and killed Private First Class Secundino Alvarez, a soldier from one of two battalions that Santa Anna had stationed on two sides of the Alamo. By March 1, the number of Mexican casualties was nine dead and four wounded, while the Texian garrison had lost only one man.

Santa Anna posted one company east of the Alamo, on the road to Gonzales. Almonte and 800 dragoons were stationed along the road to Goliad. Throughout the siege these towns had received multiple couriers, dispatched by Travis to plead for reinforcements and supplies.

The most famous of his missives, written February 24, was addressed To the People of Texas & All Americans in the World. According to historian Mary Deborah Petite, the letter is "considered by many as one of the masterpieces of American patriotism." Copies of the letter were distributed across Texas, and eventually reprinted throughout the United States and much of Europe. At the end of the first day of the siege, Santa Anna's troops were reinforced by 600 men under General Joaquin Ramirez y Sesma, bringing the Mexican army up to more than 2,000 men.

As news of the siege spread throughout Texas, potential reinforcements gathered in Gonzales. They hoped to rendezvous with Colonel James Fannin, who was expected to arrive from Goliad with his garrison. On February 26, after days of indecision, Fannin ordered 320 men, four cannons, and several supply wagons to march towards the Alamo, 90 miles away. This group traveled less than 1.0 mile before turning back. Fannin blamed the retreat on his officers; the officers and enlisted men accused Fannin of aborting the mission.

Texians gathered in Gonzales were unaware of Fannin's return to Goliad, and most continued to wait. Impatient with the delay, on February 27 Travis ordered Samuel G. Bastian to go to Gonzales "to hurry up reinforcements". According to historian Thomas Ricks Lindley, Bastian encountered the Gonzales Ranging Company led by Lieutenant George C. Kimble and Travis' courier to Gonzales, Albert Martin, who had tired of waiting for Fannin. A Mexican patrol attacked, driving off four of the men including Bastian. In the darkness, the Texians fired on the remaining 32 men, whom they assumed were Mexican soldiers. One man was wounded, and his English curses convinced the occupiers to open the gates.

On March 3, the Texians watched from the walls as approximately 1,000 Mexicans marched into Béxar. The Mexican army celebrated loudly throughout the afternoon, both in honor of their reinforcements and at the news that troops under General José de Urrea had soundly defeated Texian Colonel Frank W. Johnson at the Battle of San Patricio on February 27. Most of the Texians in the Alamo believed that Sesma had been leading the Mexican forces during the siege, and they mistakenly attributed the celebration to the arrival of Santa Anna. The reinforcements brought the number of Mexican soldiers in Béxar to almost 3,100.

The arrival of the Mexican reinforcements prompted Travis to send three men, including Davy Crockett, to find Fannin's force, which he still believed to be en route. The scouts discovered a large group of Texians camped 20 miles from the Alamo. Lindley's research indicates that up to 50 of these men had come from Goliad after Fannin's aborted rescue mission. The others had left Gonzales several days earlier. Just before daylight on March 4, part of the Texian force broke through Mexican lines and entered the Alamo. Mexican soldiers drove a second group across the prairie.

On March 4, the day after his reinforcements arrived, Santa Anna proposed an assault on the Alamo. Many of his senior officers recommended that they wait for two 12-pounder cannons anticipated to arrive on March 7.

That evening, a local woman, likely Bowie's cousin-in-law Juana Navarro Alsbury, approached Santa Anna to negotiate a surrender for the Alamo occupiers. According to many historians, this visit probably increased Santa Anna's impatience; as historian Timothy Todish noted, "there would have been little glory in a bloodless victory". The following morning, Santa Anna announced to his staff that the assault would take place early on March 6. Santa Anna arranged for troops from Béxar to be excused from the front lines so that they would not be forced to fight their own families.

Legend holds that at some point on March 5, Travis gathered his men and explained that an attack was imminent, and that they were greatly outnumbered by the Mexican Army. He supposedly drew a line in the ground and asked those willing to die for the Texian cause to cross and stand alongside him; only one man (Moses Rose) was said to have declined. Most scholars disregard this tale as there is no primary source evidence to support it (the story only surfaced decades after the battle in a third-hand account). Travis apparently did, at some point prior to the final assault, assemble the men for a conference to inform them of the dire situation and giving them the chance to either escape or stay and die for the cause. Susannah Dickinson recalled Travis announcing that any men who wished to escape should let it be known and step out of ranks. The last Texian verified to have left the Alamo was James Allen, a courier who carried personal messages from Travis and several of the other men on March 5.

At 10 p.m. on March 5, the Mexican artillery ceased their bombardment. As Santa Anna had anticipated, the exhausted Texians soon fell into the first uninterrupted sleep many of them had since the siege began. Just after midnight, more than 2,000 Mexican soldiers began preparing for the final assault. Fewer than 1,800 were divided into four columns, commanded by Cos, Colonel Francisco Duque, Colonel José María Romero and Colonel Juan Morales. Veterans were positioned on the outside of the columns to better control the new recruits and conscripts in the middle.

As a precaution, 500 Mexican cavalry were positioned around the Alamo to prevent the escape of either Texian or Mexican soldiers. Santa Anna remained in camp with the 400 reserves. Despite the bitter cold, the soldiers were ordered not to wear overcoats which could impede their movements. Clouds concealed the moon and thus the movements of the soldiers.

At 5:30 a.m. troops silently advanced. Cos and his men approached the northwest corner of the Alamo, while Duque led his men from the northwest towards a repaired breach in the Alamo's north wall. The column commanded by Romero marched towards the east wall, and Morales's column aimed for the low parapet by the chapel.



The three Texian sentinels stationed outside the walls were killed in their sleep, allowing Mexican soldiers to approach undetected within musket range of the walls. At this point, the silence was broken by shouts of "¡Viva Santa Anna!" and music from the buglers. The noise woke the Texians. Most of the noncombatants gathered in the church sacristy for safety.

Travis rushed to his post yelling, "Come on boys, the Mexicans are upon us and we'll give them hell!" and, as he passed a group of Tejanos, "¡No rendirse, muchachos!" ("Don't surrender, boys").

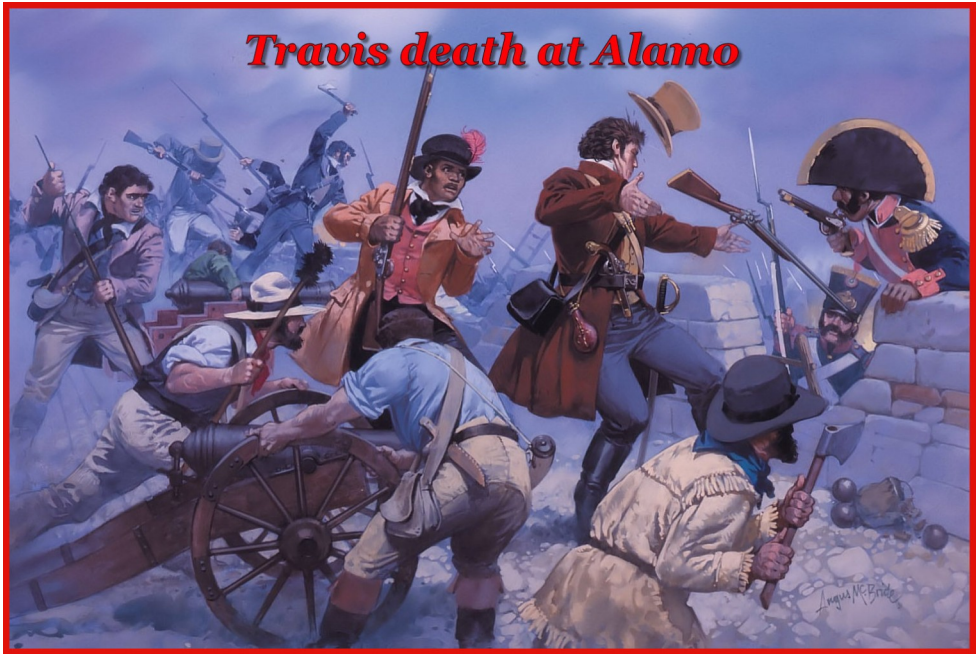
In the initial moments of the assault, Mexican troops were at a disadvantage. Their column formation allowed only the front rows of soldiers to fire safely. Unaware of the dangers, the untrained recruits in the ranks "blindly fired their guns", injuring or killing the troops in front of them.

The tight concentration of troops also offered an excellent target for the Texian artillery. Lacking canister shot, Texians filled their cannon with any metal they could find, including door hinges, nails, and chopped-up horseshoes, essentially turning the cannon into giant shotguns.

According to the diary of José Enrique de la Peña, "a single cannon volley did away with half the company of chasseurs from Toluca". Duque fell from his horse after suffering a wound in his thigh and was almost trampled by his own men. General Manuel Castrillón quickly assumed command of Duque's column.

Although some in the front of the Mexican ranks wavered, soldiers in the rear pushed them on. As the troops massed against the walls, Texians were forced to lean over the walls to shoot, leaving them exposed to Mexican fire. Travis became one of the first occupiers to die, shot while firing his shotgun into the soldiers below him, though one source says that he drew his sword and stabbed a Mexican officer who had stormed the wall before succumbing to his injury.

Few of the Mexican ladders reached the walls. The few soldiers who were able to climb the ladders were quickly killed or beaten back. As the Texians discharged their previously loaded rifles, they found it increasingly difficult to reload while attempting to keep Mexican soldiers from scaling the walls.



Mexican soldiers withdrew and regrouped, but their second attack was repulsed. Fifteen minutes into the battle, they attacked a third time. During the third strike, Romero's column, aiming for the east wall, was exposed to cannon fire and shifted to the north, mingling with the second column. Cos' column, under fire from Texians on the west wall, also veered north. When Santa Anna saw that the bulk of his army was massed against the north wall, he feared a rout; "panicked", he sent the reserves into the same area.

The Mexican soldiers closest to the north wall realized that the makeshift wall contained many gaps and toeholds. One of the first to scale the 12-foot wall was General Juan Amador; at his challenge, his men began swarming up the wall. Amador opened the postern in the north wall, allowing Mexican soldiers to pour into the complex. Others climbed through gun ports in the west wall, which had few occupiers. As the Texian occupiers abandoned the north wall and the northern end of the west wall, Texian gunners at the south end of the mission turned their cannon towards the north and fired into the advancing

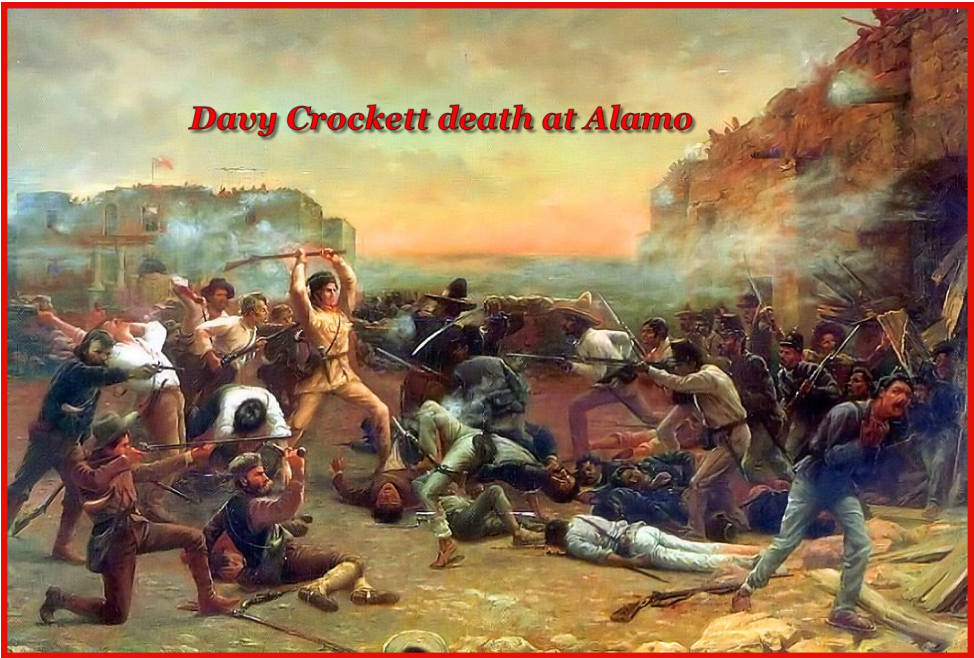
Mexican soldiers. This left the south end of the mission unprotected; within minutes Mexican soldiers had climbed the walls and killed the gunners, gaining control of the Alamo's 18-pounder cannon. By this time Romero's men had taken the east wall of the compound and were pouring in through the cattle pen.

As previously planned, most of the Texians fell back to the barracks and the chapel. Holes had been carved in the walls to allow the Texians to fire. Unable to reach the barracks, Texians stationed along the west wall headed west for the San Antonio River. When the cavalry charged, the Texians took cover and began firing from a ditch. Sesma was forced to send reinforcements, and the Texians were eventually killed. Sesma reported that this skirmish involved 50 Texians, but Edmondson believes that number was inflated.

The occupiers in the cattle pen retreated into the horse corral. After discharging their weapons, the small band of Texians scrambled over the low wall, circled behind the church and raced on foot for the east prairie, which appeared empty. As the Mexican cavalry advanced on the group, Almaron Dickinson and his artillery crew turned a cannon around and fired into the cavalry, probably inflicting casualties. Nevertheless, all of the escaping Texians were killed.

The last Texian group to remain in the open were Crockett and his men, defending the low wall in front of the church. Unable to reload, they used their rifles as clubs and fought with knives. After a volley of fire and a wave of Mexican bayonets, the few remaining Texians in this group fell back towards the church.

The Mexican army now controlled all of the outer walls and the interior of the Alamo compound except for the church and rooms along the east and west walls. Mexican soldiers turned their attention to a Texian flag waving from the roof of one building. Four Mexicans were killed before the flag of Mexico was raised in that location.



For the next hour, the Mexican army worked to secure complete control of the Alamo. Many of the remaining occupiers were ensconced in the fortified barracks rooms. In the confusion, the Texians had neglected to spike their cannon before retreating. Mexican soldiers turned the cannon towards the barracks. As each door was blown off Mexican soldiers would fire a volley of muskets into the dark room, then charge in for hand-to-hand combat.

The last of the Texians to die were the 11 men manning the two 12-pounder cannons in the chapel. A shot from the 18-pounder cannon destroyed the barricades at the front of the church, and Mexican soldiers entered the building after firing an initial musket volley. Dickinson's crew fired their cannon from the apse into the Mexican soldiers at the door. With no time to reload, the Texians, including Dickinson, Gregorio Esparza and James Bonham, grabbed rifles and fired before being bayoneted to death. Texian Robert Evans, the master of ordnance, had been tasked with keeping the gunpowder from falling into Mexican hands.

Wounded, he crawled towards the powder magazine but was killed by a musket ball with his torch only inches from the powder. Had he succeeded, the blast would have destroyed the church and killed the women and children hiding in the sacristy.

As soldiers approached the sacristy, one of the young sons of occupier Anthony Wolf stood to pull a blanket over his shoulders. In the dark, Mexican soldiers mistook him for an adult and killed him. Possibly the last Texian to die in battle was Jacob Walker, who attempted to hide behind Susannah Dickinson and was bayoneted in front of the women.

Another Texian, Brigido Guerrero, also sought refuge in the sacristy. Guerrero, who had deserted from the Mexican Army in December 1835, was spared after convincing the soldiers he was a Texian prisoner.

By 6:30 a.m. the battle for the Alamo was over. Mexican soldiers inspected each corpse, bayoneting any body that moved. Even with all of the Texians dead, Mexican soldiers continued to shoot, some killing each other in the confusion.

Mexican generals were unable to stop the bloodlust and appealed to Santa Anna for help. Although the general showed himself, the violence continued and the buglers were finally ordered to sound a retreat. For 15 minutes after that, soldiers continued to fire into dead bodies.

Too sick to participate in the battle, James Bowie likely died in bed. Eyewitnesses to the battle gave conflicting accounts of his death. Some witnesses maintained that they saw several Mexican soldiers enter Bowie's room, bayonet him, and carry him alive from the room.

Others claimed that Bowie shot himself or was killed by soldiers while too weak to lift his head. According to historian Wallace Chariton, the "most popular, and probably the most accurate" version is that Bowie died on his cot, "back braced against the wall, and using his pistols and his famous knife.



During his lifetime he had been described by his old friend Caiaphas K. Ham as "a clever, polite gentleman...attentive to the ladies on all occasions...a true, constant, and generous friend...a foe no one dared to undervalue and many feared." Slave trader, gambler, land speculator, dreamer, and hero, James Bowie in death became immortal in the annals of Texas history.

END – “Jim Bowie – Life Legacy Legend”

About the Author

Larry W Jones is a songwriter, having penned over 7,700 song lyrics. Published in 22 volumes of island themed, country, cowboy, western and bluegrass songs. The entire assemblage is the world's largest collection of lyrics written by an individual songwriter.

As a wrangler on the "Great American Horse Drive", at age 68, he assisted in driving 800 half-wild horses 62 miles in two days, from Winter pasture grounds in far NW Colorado to the Big Gulch Ranch outside of Craig Colorado.

His book, "The Oldest Greenhorn", chronicles the adventures and perils in earning the "Gate-to-Gate" trophy belt buckle the hard way.



Other books published by Larry W Jones:

A Squirrel Named Julie and The Fox Ridge Fox
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Red Cloud – Chief Of the Sioux
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